

ATTITUDES TOWARD CHILDHOOD
AND CHILDREN IN MEDIEVAL JEWISH SOCIETY
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In European Society: The Controversy

In 1960, Phillipe Ariès published a controversial book entitled *L'enfant et la vie familiale sous l'ancien régime*.¹ The book was translated into English in 1962 and entitled *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*.² Ariès maintains that in western Europe until the sixteenth century, no one paid much attention to children during the enfances stage of childhood (birth to age seven). This does not mean that all children in the Middle Ages were necessarily despised or neglected. Rather, the awareness of what distinguished a child from an adult was lacking and, as a result, there was no appreciation of childhood for its own sake.³ Citing evidence from iconography which depicted the "ages of children," the history of games and children's dress, and a vast array of medieval texts, Ariès argues that in medieval society, there was a complete lack of attribution of any special character to childhood.⁴ Parents did not accept children on their own terms, enjoy them or coddle them.⁵ There was also no attempt made by parents to inculcate self-control or supervise the young child's moral development.⁶ The new-born baby who had not yet acquired certain physical and intellectual skills was treated with indifference.⁷ The death of a small child was not a cause for great sorrow.⁸ Indeed, Prof. Lynn White, who accepts Ariès thesis, sees the relative indifference of adults toward children as directly related to the high infant and child mortality rate. It did not pay to invest great emotional capital in a child whose chance of survival was less than fifty percent.⁹

Ariès further claimed that once the child reached the post-enfances stage and did not need to be cared for as much as before, he immediately became part of the adult world. Thus medieval education was not geared to children but to "little adults." There was no structured primary education at all. When children did begin their schooling, there was no attempt made to separate students of different ages and abilities.¹⁰ The

educational process was such that in most cases, the child was removed from his family and was taken by the teacher or tutor to live in a different household or location. This further loosened the bonds between parents and children and encouraged these students, because of a lack of discipline, to become rowdy.¹¹ The loosely knit family prevailed throughout the Middle Ages and it was not until the modern period that the concept of a nuclear family, centering around children and their parents, became firmly established.¹²

Ariès' book evoked varied responses but most certainly revitalized interest in children and childhood. Some scholars, while generally accepting Ariès' thesis, attempted to blunt the force of some of his conclusions by finding sources which ran counter to the thesis. Thus, U. T. Holmes in a 1968 review of Ariès' work, gathered some anecdotal texts which show an appreciation of childhood on the part of the central figures in those texts.¹³ For example, in *The Life of William Marshall*, little William's cute childish talk and mannerisms while at play gave pleasure to King Stephen and indeed saved William's life while he was being held hostage.¹⁴ Chrétien de Troyes writes of a father who embraces his young daughter and protects her from being teased by her older sister.¹⁵ Holmes claims that children did have their own toys and did amuse themselves with a variety of games. The fact that adults would amuse themselves with some of these games, which led Ariès to conclude that children did not have their own "childish" games, is considered by Holmes to be inconsequential. Evidence from art, which shows that children were not well-depicted or were drawn as little adults, may have been due to the poor drawing techniques employed before 1400. As for education, Holmes shows that in the upper strata of society, a child was often given a *maistre* or *garde*. The *maistre*, who was often not much older, supervised the child's studies and served *in loco parentis*. Holmes concludes however, that in the majority of cases, children between the ages of seven and fourteen were sent away from the home to be educated or received training without any form of parental control. L. Stone claims that as a result of this practice, even if the parents selected their child's marriage partner, the couple normally set up house independently, often at some distance from the parents.¹⁶

In the 1970's, new interest in the history of childhood fostered directly and indirectly by Ariès' work, brought forth additional material. Most of the research centered around the first part of Ariès' thesis, that childhood as a distinct entity and parental appreciation of childhood were not to be found in medieval society. David Hunt, writing in 1970, questioned the plausibility of some of Ariès' conclusions in light of the basic tenets of human psychology. If the indifference of the parents to their younger offspring was as deep and pervasive as Ariès suggests, the very lives of these children would be threatened.¹⁷ In the mid-seventies, several papers presented additional sources and materials which showed among other things, that medieval art did portray children's faces and bodies as distinct from those of adults.¹⁸ The most significant and heavily documented article produced at this time was an article by Mary McLaughlin entitled "Survivors and Surrogates: Children and Parents from the Ninth to the Thirteenth Centuries," published in a volume entitled *History of Childhood*.¹⁹ Using a wide range of sources, McLaughlin shows that from the twelfth century on, tenderness toward children, interest in the stages of childhood development and responsiveness to the beauty of children can be documented in poems, tales, philosophical and scientific works and hagiography.²⁰ Greater interest in developing the morality of children can also be found especially in the thirteenth century encyclopedia of Bartholomew of England and the work of his contemporary Vincent of Beauvais on the education of noble children entitled *De Eruditione filiorum nobilium*.²¹ It is striking however, that, as McLaughlin herself notes, few of these sources represent the views of actual parents. They may reflect an ideal rather than a practice, although the idea itself is significant. Indeed, in entitling her paper "Survivors and Surrogates," McLaughlin claims to sum up the actual position of children in medieval society. There is ample evidence for children who were neglected, beaten and even murdered. The enactment of corrective legislation, ecclesiastic and secular, indicates that such occurrences were not rare.²²

It is not the purpose of this study to confirm or deny Ariès' conclusions per se. This study will demonstrate that if the questions which Ariès raised are asked about Jewish society

the development of acceptable social behavior in young children.³⁴

Ariès had noted that in the Middle Ages, owing largely to the fact that there was no nuclear family and that a whole host of characters lived in the house with the family, children were exposed both physically and verbally to sexual abuse, immodesty and misconduct.³⁵ Intuitively, medieval Jewish historians would argue that the observance of normative Jewish law by a significant portion of the Jewish population would preclude these abuses.³⁶ A text in the polemical tract *Sefer ha-Berit* by R. Joseph Kimḥi argues precisely that: "The ma'amin said: Oppression and theft are not as widespread among Jews as among Christians Those Jews and Jewesses, who are modest in all their deeds, raise their children, from the youngest to the oldest, in the study of Torah. If they hear a vile word from the mouth [of a child], they beat him and chastise him so that he would no longer swear with his lips. They also train him to pray every day . . . Their daughters, because of modesty, are not to be seen about nor found in a wanton manner like the daughters of the Gentiles."³⁷ The basic statement of the Jew about Jewish morality and educational practices is not contested by the Christian. Even if the debate in *Sefer ha-Berit* is an imaginary one,³⁸ we possess several revealing statements by Christians in their scholarly literature which acknowledge that on the whole Jews are more interested in educating their children than Christians and that Jewish morality is generally on a higher level.³⁹ Another aspect of childhood development raised by this source is the role of the synagogue. As we will see shortly, the Jewish communities welcomed children into the synagogues, not as little adults but as children, and encouraged their attendance.

The Evidence from *Sefer Ḥasidim*

A most important source for our study of medieval Jewish attitudes toward childhood is the *Sefer Ḥasidim*. Ascribed to R. Yehudah he-Ḥasid, who died in Regensburg in 1217, this work is the handbook of the Ḥasidei Ashkenaz, the German Pietists, who lived alongside the Tosafists in twelfth century Ashkenaz.⁴⁰ While many sections of the book are devoted to the proper beliefs and practices of the Pietist community, the book as a whole often

has the flavor of a work designed to promote self-improvement of the individual in a wide range of areas. The eminent Jewish historian Fritz Baer, in a pioneering article written almost fifty years ago but still considered a most important study of *Sefer Ḥasidim*, points to the similarities between this work and the exempla produced in Christian monastic circles at this time.⁴¹ The actions of a particular rabbi or scholar in *Sefer Ḥasidim* cannot very often be taken as historical fact. They may be acting or reacting, in effect, to help make the point of the author. But attitudes or practices which *Sefer Ḥasidim* seeks to correct or embellish, or which form the silent backdrop for the Hasid's discussions can be considered as actual attitudes of the period. Thus, a recent article uses *Sefer Ḥasidim* as an important source for shedding light on medical practices among Jews in medieval Germany.⁴² Bearing this methodological caveat in mind, we find several sections in *Sefer Ḥasidim* which indicate that parents truly enjoyed playing with or being with their small children and normally took time to do so, that they were concerned with and attuned to the emotional well-being of their small children, and that the death of a small child was a cause for great sorrow.⁴³

A most instructive example is this section: "Towards evening, a man should not take a child onto his lap, lest the child dirty his [father's] clothes. If you were to suggest that he can wash his clothes, [this is not satisfactory because] they will not be as clean as before. Also while the father looks for water, the time for praying the Minhah service may pass . . . and he will arrive late, after the congregation has begun to pray. In addition, it is possible that when the father tries to put the child down, the child will cry. The father will be most concerned with the child and not with giving honor to his Creator (yaḥus 'al ha-yeled ve-lo 'al kevod qono)."⁴⁴ Moreover, talking or playing with a small child was a source of pleasure for the parent. The author of *Sefer Ḥasidim* welcomes these activities at the appropriate time as helpful diversions, while cautioning that they should not cause the father to be remiss in his religious duties such as prayer and study. Thus, the following suggestion: "A person who is troubled and his mind cannot comprehend because of the pain should remove the pain by taking a walk and then return to the study of Torah. Also, a person of troubled mind on

the Sabbath should speak with a youth in order to remove the melancholy from his heart. But he should not stroll [idly] with the child or kiss him in the synagogue."⁴⁵

It is interesting that in both these sections (in the case of the first, just prior to the material cited), the author of *Sefer Ḥasidim* seeks to restrict the father's kissing of the child in the synagogue, in order that the father show love and devotion only for his Creator. In other sections, *Sefer Ḥasidim* wishes to minimize this practice because it would show insensitivity to those who did not have or who had lost children.⁴⁶

It would seem that the synagogue was a place where children were normally brought and treated in a way that would encourage their attendance. While they were in attendance, the father would pay great attention to them and display his love for the child.⁴⁷ There is a passage found in several volumes of the *sifrut devei Rashi* which asserts that a Rhineland scholar, perhaps R. Eliezer ha-Gadol, the great teacher of Mainz in the first half of the eleventh century, would pray with a small child (*tinnoq*) in his lap (or perhaps on his shoulders). He would remove the child only when it came time to recite the *Shema*.⁴⁸ Moreover, a passage in *Sefer Or Zarua* encourages parents to bring little children, both male and female, to the synagogue. Thus, R. Isaac Or Zarua heartily endorses the prevalent custom of allowing the children to kiss the Torah while it is being rolled up. This will heighten the sensitivity of the children to the performance of religious precepts. Their attendance generally will inculcate *yir'at shamayim*.⁴⁹ Other synagogue customs of this period, such as the reading of certain verses of the Book of Esther in a loud voice and the drowning out of Haman's name, are explained by medieval halakhists as customs initiated to make the young children happy and thereby retain their interest.⁵⁰ Several customs at the Passover Seder also developed for this reason.⁵¹

The material cited thus far from *Sefer Ḥasidim* is significant because it shows the practices and attitudes of Jewish parents in this period. Other sections in *Sefer Ḥasidim* indicate that the author of *Sefer Ḥasidim* himself had a noteworthy appreciation of childhood which he wanted to share with his readers. In counseling that tutors for young children be hired not only on the basis of their grasp of the material to be taught but on

their ability to use the material to teach religious values, he describes the nature of a young child's intellect in this way: "A child's intellect (libbo) is like the intellect of an adult who is dreaming; dreamers assume that all [they dream] is true. So too children; they assume that all your words are true, until he is indoctrinated by bad friends."⁵² Several sections in *Sefer Ḥasidim* show awareness of the great curiosity of children and advise that precautions be taken in light of this curiosity. An example: "'Place not blood in your house' (Deut. 22:8) . . . if a person falls, even though he does not die, Scripture accuses him [the homeowner] of spilling blood. A person should not place a pitcher of water in his home because it is the nature of children to look at their images in water. Maybe the child will bend over and will fall into the water . . ."⁵³

Arbitrarily halting our investigation at this point, we can conclude that there is evidence for scholarly and lay appreciation of children within Jewish society in western Europe. A passage in *Tosafot ha-Rosh* proclaims this appreciation most clearly. The Amora R. Judah, on the basis of a verse in Isaiah, claims that Jacob spared Abraham from the travails of raising children (za'ar giddul banim). Rashi interprets that Jacob fathered the twelve tribes in place of Abraham. *Tosafot ha-Rosh* states: "Ein ha-banim za'ar la-'adam 'ela simḥah." Having children and raising them is on balance a positive, happy occurrence. Jacob spared Abraham from the specific problems generated by Joseph, Dinah and Simeon. But having children in and of itself is a cause for joy, not an automatic dose of pain.⁵⁴ Parents did enjoy their children and some were clearly cognizant of the distinct nature of childhood.⁵⁵ Undoubtedly related to this conclusion is the very strong impression that Jewish children were on the whole simply treated in a manner far superior to their Christian counterparts.

In Jewish Society: Legal Status, Education, and Marriage

There are several responsa which deal with child custody in cases of divorce and death and with the responsibilities of a father who abandons his wife and children.⁵⁶ There was an ordinance promulgated by R. Tam that a father who is away from his home for an extended period of time to collect his debts or

to conduct his business or to study (all of which required court permission to begin with) had to continue to support his family and provide for the children's education in six-month installments.⁵⁷ All these sources leave one with the impression that the children in question were provided for, and the sources do not have either a threatening or hopeless tone. This impression is very different from the one which McLaughlin emerges with at the end of her study.⁵⁸ Indicative of the Jewish literature is a responsum of R. Joseph Ibn Megash concerning the parental custody of a four year old girl whose parents were divorced.⁵⁹ The father left town after the divorce and the child remained in the mother's custody. When the father returned two years later, he wished to gain custody of the child. The mother resisted saying that she had supported the child for the past two years and that the child at this point felt closer to her mother. The child herself broke into tears when the matter was broached. The father claimed that he was obligated to support the child and that he would do so. On the basis of Geonic precedent, R. Megash ruled that the child should remain with her mother, adding that the mother is generally more concerned with the child's welfare than the father and is better equipped to instruct the girl in living her life. The response of R. Megash is interesting, as is the position of the father. Apparently, the father was significantly attached to his child to wish to return to his role, although R. Joseph writes in his response that he does not believe that the father can be trusted to remain with the child in light of his initial departure.

As for Ariès' findings concerning the educational process and its contribution to the weakening of family bonds in the Middle Ages, my own extensive research into the educational structures of Ashkenazic Jewry in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries has yielded the following conclusions: there was no system of primary education in the modern sense of the term in Ashkenazic communities. However, there is evidence for children being given a reading familiarity with the Biblical text, through tutoring, beginning before the child was seven years old.⁶⁰ The more than forty Ashkenazic responsa dealing with elementary education show clearly that this level of education always took place under parental control either in the student's home or in the tutor's home or in rented rooms in the same town.⁶¹ In one

responsum of R. Gershom, the father hires a tutor (older student) who will take his son and acclimate him to life in a yeshiva out of town.⁶² This seems similar to the *maistre* described by Holmes, but the process is still under the father's control. Other sources show that the decision to leave town to study in a higher academy was made around the time of *bar-mizvah*.⁶³ As such, the educational process in Jewish society was very much connected to the child's home and cannot be seen as disruptive to family life.

In addition, we do find in *Sefer Ḥasidim* and in *Sefer Ḥuggei ha-Torah*⁶⁴ attempts to separate students with differing abilities and to direct students with different proclivities into different disciplines. Both *Sefer Ḥasidim* and *Sefer Ḥuggei ha-Torah* direct the struggling Talmud student into midrash or codes. Both works attempt to monitor the elementary level student to see if he is making progress. If the student is not, these sources call for changing either the teacher or the subject matter. This is done to help both the weaker and the stronger student who might be held back as a result of the weaker one.⁶⁵ While these works should be viewed as attempts at reform and do not reflect normative practice, their existence in light of Ariès' conclusions is significant.

In medieval Jewish society, even the marriage of the child did not automatically lead to a dissolution of the family. There is ample evidence that married children lived near at least one set of parents, usually the groom's. This development can be found in Ashkenaz as early as the eleventh century. Two questions in the *Sefer Ha-Dinim* of R. Yehudah ha-Kohen refer to this practice as their point of departure.⁶⁶ In a responsum addressed to R. Meir ha-Levi Abulafia, the scenario presented is of a suitor who comes to a city, marries a girl from that city and brings the girl back to his home town to live in his mother's home.⁶⁷ In light of the clearly documented practice in medieval Jewish society of children marrying at a young age,⁶⁸ this development concerning where the young couple lived is hardly surprising. To be sure, not every young couple lived with their parents during the early years of their married life. R. Solomon Ibn Adret (Rashba) held however, that " . . . a woman must live with her father-in-law and mother-in-law, for her husband is obliged to honor and fear them, and may not depart from them."⁶⁹

That the son and daughter-in-law actually lived in the home of his parents is seen from another responsum of Rashba. The questioner asked Rashba if a woman, who does not wish to continue to live together with her mother-in-law because the mother-in-law causes quarrels between husband and wife, may force her husband to move. Rashba responds that the wife can demand this of her husband but that he only need move out of his parents' house but not to another neighborhood in honoring his wife's request.⁷⁰

A section in *Sefer Ḥasidim* mandates that the son live near his parents so that the son can continue to fulfill his filial obligations: "Parents who command their son not to marry so that he might serve them make an inadmissible request; let him marry and live near them. But if he cannot find a wife in the town in which his parents live, let him not leave town . . . But if the son is wealthy and can have someone else serve his parents, he may then go to another town to take a wife."⁷¹ The following section shows that in thirteenth century Ashkenazic society, it was still in vogue for the young couple to live in close proximity to their parents: "If one's parents constantly argue with one's wife and if he would tell his wife to keep silent she would become quarrelsome with him . . . let him keep silent himself . . . And if the father and mother are contentious people who bicker with his wife, and he knows that his wife is in the right, he should not rebuke his wife so as to please his parents."⁷²

It is interesting that the operant principle behind the policy of both Rashba and the author of *Sefer Ḥasidim* of requiring the son to continue to live with his parents as was usually the case in medieval Jewish society, is that the son must fulfill his obligations to his parents.⁷³ The evidence from responsa literature cited above, suggests that the parents were usually pleased that the couple would live near them and often paid for, or provided, the couple's lodging.⁷⁴ Sometimes, the requirement for the couple to live in the same town as the parents was stipulated at the time of the betrothal as a condition for the marriage.⁷⁵ But the religious obligation to honor one's parents is clearly one reason for a son choosing to remain in close proximity to his parents. This observation raises a far larger question in light of our discussion of attitudes toward childhood. Can the enlightened attitude of Jewish parents toward

their children in the medieval period be understood in part as a function of the halakhic responsibilities that a parent has for a son?

The answer to this question is one that is not easily arrived at. I think however, that a preliminary suggestion can be made. J. L. Flandrin in a work entitled *Families in Former Times--Kinship, Household and Sexuality*,⁷⁶ argues that the poor treatment of children and the lack of parental appreciation of children in Christian society until the period of the Reformation may be explained by the lack of a coherent, comprehensive formulation of parental obligations in Church law until that period.⁷⁷ The high rate of infanticide through the High Middle Ages is explained by Flandrin as a function of the fact that in popular medieval ideology, children belonged solely to their parents and were thought to exist totally under parental control.⁷⁸ Thus, parents felt that they were not responsible to any higher authority when it came to the welfare of their children. While the Bible, in no less a text than the Ten Commandments mandates that children respect and aid their parents, there is no Biblical formulation of parental obligations to their children. Ambrose of Milan and Augustine wrote that parents must nourish their child's body and soul--they must feed their child and provide some measure of moral education.⁷⁹ Apparently, these somewhat nebulous teachings did not make a great impression on many medieval parents. It is only in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, especially as influenced by the Protestant Reformation and Catholic Counter-Reformation, that parents respond to new religious law which contained more extensive and more specific responsibilities regarding their children.⁸⁰ Parental responsibilities are derived not because the parents "own" the child but because proper care and support and training of children is required by Divine law. Parents must, by law, provide religious and moral education for their children, teach their children a means of earning a livelihood and on the simplest level, insure their physical safety.⁸¹ If one sired children, one was obligated to educate them. Moreover, parents were now required to be more vigilant concerning when and whom their children married.⁸² These new formulations did ultimately affect Christian parents. Flandrin notes that a move by Christian parents to limit their fertility by means of birth control

followed in the wake of the Reformation and counter-Reformation. These limitations may have been initiated because the moralists of the period made parents realize the full extent of their obligations to their children.⁸³

We need look no further than the Talmud to see that rabbinic Judaism mandated quite clearly that the father support his son, educate him, prepare him for a trade and find for him a suitable mate.⁸⁴ These basic requirements were subsequently added to by a number of medieval authorities.⁸⁵ Failure to comply with these requirements constituted a transgression against God, while those who complied with these dicta were vouchsafed Divine reward.⁸⁶ These obligations on the father, and to a lesser extent on the mother, could easily develop in the parent a deep sense of commitment to the child's development, aside from the natural feelings of love which the parent has for the child. With all that Jewish law requires of a parent, assuming that medieval Jewish parents on the whole fulfilled these basic requirements, the picture we have drawn of parental attitudes toward children and childhood may well be viewed as a societal extension of the letter of the law. In Christian society, enlightened and improved attitudes toward childhood seem to coincide with the promulgation of legal requirements between parent and child. The evidence for appreciation of childhood by medieval Jewish scholars and laymen may also be viewed as a kind of extra-legal policy adopted by these Jews in the spirit of what they observed as part of Jewish law.

Summary

This study has demonstrated that there is significant evidence for an appreciation of childhood for its own sake among medieval European Jewry. While the evidence is for the most part literary, it reflects, in large measure, the feelings of actual parents and cannot be qualified as the product of scholarly musings. The child in Jewish society was valued as a source of pleasure and as an important resource for the future. The training of the child in matters of morality and religious sensibility should commence at an early age on a level which the child could appreciate. Close bonds between the child and his parents were not loosened by either the educational developments or the

child's marriage. An hypothesis to explain these developments has also been suggested. When compared to earlier studies on attitudes toward childhood in general medieval society, the material in this study indicates a much different perspective in medieval Jewish society.

of a nursemaid, even a non-Jewish one, is preferred by Ramah in this situation where allowing the child to travel with his mother will place the child in danger.⁷

R. Isaac Or Zaru'fa expresses concern that a pregnant woman should be most careful not to eat non-kosher food because that action, according to a passage in Talmud Yerushalmi, can adversely affect the spiritual persona of the child. Furthermore, he advises that nursemaids (meiniqot) not feed the children prohibited foods, "in order that they become good Jews."⁸ It would seem clear from the context that this wet-nurse is non-Jewish. The author of *Sefer Ḥasidim* is concerned lest non-Jewish wet-nurses and servants feed children and others in the household non-kosher food.⁹ R. Meir of Rothenburg was asked to react to the fact that meiniqot goyot were giving wine to young children. He responds that this practice need not be stopped.¹⁰ One might argue that this woman served as a nanny for these children to whom she gave wine. In light of the sources cited above, there is no reason to doubt that she served at some point as a wet-nurse. Moreover, numerous pieces of Church legislation sought to prohibit the use of Christian wet nurses by Jews.¹¹

The Talmud recognizes that the child prefers his mother's milk and is best served by his mother nursing him. Indeed, nursing her children is part of a wife's obligation to her husband. A sugya in *Ketubot* (59b) discusses the parameters of this obligation. Included in this discussion is a regulation that if the child recognizes its mother's milk (see Rashi's commentary ad. loc.) and a divorce ensues, the divorced mother must nurse the child, with the father providing monetary compensation. The child's health would be adversely affected if the mother was to discontinue her nursing. The observations of various medieval halakhists based on this sugya may contain historically relevant material.¹² A clearly relevant comment is one by R. Isaiah the Younger (Riaz): "Even when a non-Jewish woman has accepted a (Jewish) child to nurse, if the child recognizes her, she must be compelled with compensation, to continue nursing the child lest the child be in danger."¹³

NOTES

¹ The book was published in Paris by Librairie Plon. A second edition was published in 1972. It contains a new introduction by Ariès in which he responds to some of the criticism of his first edition.

² The work was translated by R. Baldick and published in New York by Vintage Books. All page references are to this edition.

³ P. Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, pp. 128-29; 9-10. (Hereafter cited as Ariès). Cf. D. Hunt, below, n. 16, p. 34.

⁴ Ariès, pp. 33-34; 43-50; 91-92. Cf. D. Wrong's review of Ariès' work in *Scientific American* 208 (1963): 182.

⁵ Ariès, pp. 129-31. Cf. L. Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (London, 1977), pp. 112-14. (Hereafter cited as Stone). Like Ariès, Stone wishes to demonstrate the shifts in the attitude toward childhood in European society (in Stone's case specifically in English society) as the Middle Ages gave way to the early modern period. Ariès however, spends more time discussing attitudes toward childhood in the medieval period in order to sharpen his comparisons. Stone's conclusions ultimately dovetail with Ariès' conclusions, both in terms of the nature of the shifts and the timetable. Stone is more sensitive than Ariès in distinguishing between the attitudes of the upper and lower strata of society. See below, n. 12.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 100-02; 113-21.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 128; 27-29.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 38-40. See also Stone, pp. 105-06 and below at the end of n. 14.

⁹ L. White, "Technology Assessment from the Stance of a Medieval Historian," *American Historical Review* 79 (1974): 9-10. Cf. Stone, pp. 105-07, 113. For the change in attitude beginning with the late seventeenth century, see pp. 246-48.

¹⁰ Ariès, pp. 140; 145-54.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 365-69; 411-13; 315-24. Upper class or upper middle-class children were sent to a boarding school or to live with a tutor in order to acquire an education. Lower down the social scale, children were sent to the homes of others to begin work as apprentices, domestic servants or laborers. See Stone, pp. 107, 109-11. Cf. L. DeMause (below, n. 13), p. 33, and J. L. Flandrin (below, n. 73), pp. 203-04.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 405-07 and *passim*. L. K. Berkner, "Recent Research on the History of the Family in Europe," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 35 (1973): 395-96, notes correctly that Ariès' examples are based almost exclusively on sources that reflect the attitudes of the aristocracy and upper classes in

European society. Quite clearly, attitudes of the lower classes toward children and childhood would be less enlightened. As will be shown, it is appropriate to compare attitudes toward children in Jewish society to the attitudes of the upper class in general society. See M. Gudemann, *Ha-Torah v'ha-Hayyim*, v. 1 (Warsaw, 1897), pp. 186-87, R. W. Southern, *Medieval Humanism and Other Studies* (New York, 1970), p. 11, and the preceding note. Cf. *Tosafot Bava Qamma 58a*, s.v. 'I nami mavriah ari.

13 U. T. Holmes, "Medieval Childhood," *Journal of Social History* 2 (1968): 164-72. Cf. M. McLaughlin, below, n. 19. While McLaughlin refers only once to Ariès in a note to her article (p. 102, n. 4), it is obvious that the material she assembles is designed to conflict with some of Ariès' conclusions. A more direct attack is mounted by L. DeMause, "The Evolution of childhood," in *The History of Childhood*, ed. L. DeMause (New York, 1974), pp. 1-73.

14 William Marshall was an English statesman who lived in the latter half of the twelfth century (1146-1219). His biography was written in the thirteenth century by a biographer who was old enough to remember some aspects of William's life. The details of his childhood may have been supplied by family members. See J. Crosland, *William the Marshall: The Last Great Feudal General* (London, 1962), pp. 8-10. Crosland characterizes the childhood portion of the biography as "ringing true." For background on William being taken as a hostage (as a guarantee for a truce between Stephen and William's father Marshal John) see pp. 19-20. Interestingly, while King Stephen displays a very positive attitude toward childhood as Holmes notes, John himself is unconcerned that his son's life is in danger while he is held captive. John says, "What does it matter? I possess the anvil and hammer with which to produce many more." See below, n. 22.

15 Chrétien de Troyes was a contemporary of William. This reference is from his *Conte du Graal*. See Holmes, "Medieval Childhood," p. 166, n. 11.

16 Stone, p. 108. Holmes argues (pp. 170-72), without much force, that the impending marriage of a child did not necessarily weaken the ties of the child to his parents. On the issue of the age of male and female children at marriage, dealt with by both Stone and Holmes, see also Ariès, pp. 102-03. The consensus of these scholars is that for males, there was often a period of several years between adolescence and marriage. For Jewish society, see below, n. 65.

17 D. Hunt, *Parents and Children in History* (New York, 1970), pp. 39-44.

18 I. H. Forsythe, "Children in Early Medieval Art, Ninth Through Twelfth Centuries," *History of Childhood Quarterly*, v. 4 (1976-77):31-70. See also, in the same volume, L. Demaitre, "The Idea of Childhood and Childcare in the Medical Writings of the Middle Ages," pp. 461-90. Forsythe refers to several additional papers, most notably those delivered at the Tenth Annual Medieval Studies Conference held at Kalamazoo, Michigan in 1975. I have not as yet been able to retrieve those studies.

19 M. McLaughlin, "Survivors and Surrogates: Children and Parents from the Ninth to the Thirteenth Centuries," in *History of Childhood*, ed. L. DeMause (New York, 1974), pp. 101-81. (Hereafter cited as McLaughlin). This volume led to the creation of a periodical called the *History of Childhood Quarterly*. The nascence of this periodical is itself an indication of the revitalized interest of scholars in childhood in history. Following the publication of volume four, the periodical was renamed the *Journal of Psycho-History*.

20 See especially pp. 117-18, 127, 132.

21 *Ibid.*, pp. 135-39. Bartholomaeus Anglicus taught theology at the University of Paris and c. 1225 joined the Franciscan order. His views on childhood are found in his oft-printed encyclopedia, *De proprietatibus rerum*. In this work, Bartholomew cites the views of Greek, Jewish and Arabic scholars on medical and scientific subjects. Vincent's work on the education of noble children was written at the request of Queen Margaret, wife of St. Louis. It was edited by A. Steiner in 1928. See also A. L. Gabriel, *The Educational Ideas of Vincent of Beauvais* (South Bend, 1962).

22 *Ibid.*, pp. 111-12; 120-21. Thus, there is evidence for royal and Church legislation to prevent the "overlying" of infants by their parents. Cf. Stone, p. 474.

23 The bulk of Ariès' sources are from France and England, with other areas in western Europe being represented as well. As such, we limit the present study to Jewish society in western Europe. While the social history of the Jews in northern France undoubtedly differs in many ways from the social history of Jews in Christian Spain (as but one example), I find no reason to assume a priori that attitudes toward childhood would necessarily be different. I think that my conclusions will bear this observation out. While the intellectual historian must always view Sefarad and Ashkenaz in a comparative light, the social historian may, if the evidence warrants, view these cultures as on the same side of the ledger, with the general society forming the corrective element of the study. This approach will be utilized for Jewish society within the boundaries of medieval Christendom. For Jewish attitudes toward childhood in Arab and mediterranean Moslem lands, see S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, v. 3 (The Family), pp. 229-50. Goitein devotes an entire section to depicting the nuclear family as described in the texts of the Cairo Geniza. There is also an essay on the value of children to parents. On the whole, this section seeks to collect and broadly categorize the material.

24 The commentary was edited by M. Kasher and Y. Blacherowitz as part of their *Perushei Rishonim le-Massekhet Avot* (Jerusalem, 1974). M. Saperstein, who has worked extensively with this commentary, has noted the many discrepancies between the printed edition and the manuscript, Escorial Library of Madrid, Hebrew ms. G.IV.3. See M. Saperstein, *Decoding the Rabbis* (Cambridge, Mass., 1980), p. 21, n. 2. See also I. Twersky, "Yedayah ha-Penini's Commentary on the Aggadah," (Hebrew) in *Studies in Jewish Religious and Intellectual History Presented to A. Altmann*, ed. S. Stein and R. Loewe (Alabama, 1979), p. 75, n. 8. I have checked the section cited here in the

manuscript (fol. 14 r-v) and the discrepancies are minor. The text as it appears in the manuscript is the basis for the translations and citations in this study. In the printed edition, the text is found in the commentary to chapter three, mishnah 14, p. 63.

25 Saperstein, *ibid.*, p. 21, n. 1, and in greater detail, *idem.*, "R. Isaac b. Yeda'ya: A Forgotten Commentary on the Aggadah," *R&J* 138 (1979):17-45. See now the review of Saperstein's book by J. Elbaum in *Tarbiz* 52 (1984) 675.

26 The phrase in the mishnah which R. Isaac comments on reads: ". . . ve-siḥat yeladim . . . mozi'in 'et ha-'adam min ha-'olam."

27 ". . . veyesh lo le-qaṭan ga'gu'im 'al ha-av kol asher yedabber 'im tov 'im ra'.

28 "Ki khiḥen ṭeva' ha-'adam lihiyot ha-'av veba-'em mishtadlim bivnaihem keshe-hem qeṭanim min ha-gadol ha-yode'a livhor ba-ṭov u-ma'os ba-ra' ve-'eino zariḥ 'od le-meineqet."

29 Cf. the comment of R. Yonah of Gerona (d. 1263) in *Perushei R. Yonah 'al Massekhet Avot*, ed. M. Kasher and Y. Blacherowitz (Jerusalem, 1969), p. 45: "The conversation of children--this pleasure (sha'shu'a) tugs at the hearts of people because of their love for the children, and the study of Torah is thereby vitiated," and the comment of R. Baḥya ben Asher (c. 1300) in *Kitvei Rabbeinu Baḥya*, ed. C. B. Chavel (Jerusalem, 1970), p. 580: "Constant conversation with them will lead one to frivolity . . . because their words tug at the heart and people are drawn to them." R. Baḥya cites a passage from *Kohelet Rabbah* to show that the father loves the small child even more the older one. The comment of R. Yonah which is a brief and fairly obvious interpretation of the mishnah, may be the product of exegesis rather than a reflection of historical reality. The same observation probably holds true for R. Baḥya's comment although it should be noted that R. Baḥya is writing after R. Isaac b. Yedayah. The development and details of the parent-child relationship, in particular the great parental love, appreciation and interest for the small child, included by R. Isaac b. Yedayah in his comment clearly show that R. Isaac himself had an excellent awareness of the distinct nature of childhood. Moreover, the preaching tone of R. Isaac and the stress laid on parental improvement in this comment render the comment a reflection of, and response to, actual parental attitudes and practices.

Note the different attitude of parents to childhood as expressed by Maimonides in *Moreh Nebukhim* 3:49. One reason given by Maimonides for the circumcision of the child being mandated by the Torah on the eighth day is because, ". . . the love of a father and mother for the newborn child is not as strong as the love for the child when he is a year old. The love for a one year old is not as the love for a six year old. If two or three years were allowed to elapse, prior to the circumcision, the circumcision would be cancelled by the father because of his feelings of mercy and great love for the child." While this formulation may be significant for our discussion, and indeed, McLaughlin (p. 138) considers it as such, it may well be the reasoned opinion of a philosopher and not a reflection of

parental attitudes toward childhood in his time. Maimonides describes the lesser love which the father has for the newborn child in the following terms: ". . . aval bi-zeman leidato otah ha-zurah sheba-medamneh palushah me'od." Cf. the formulation of Phillip of Novara cited by McLaughlin, *ibid.* (Maimonides is, in any event, geographically outside the scope of this study).

Bahya Ibn Paquda's formulation (*Hovot ha-Levavot*, Sha'ar ha-Be'inah, ch. 5, Warsaw edition, pp. 118-20) may also be in this category. Some of his perceptive observations, which are certainly more expansive than those of Maimonides, adumbrate those of R. Menahem Ibn Zerah (see below), although Menahem's formulation is much more practical. Like Maimonides, Bahya assumes that parental love and concern grow as the child's rational faculties and abilities develop and progress. It should be noted that Bahya imparts these views of childhood when he discusses the notion that man can better understand the protective relationship between God and man by studying the relationship between parent and child: "The baby is delivered into this world with his senses weak except for taste and touch so his Creator prepares food for him, his mother's breasts turning the blood, which used to nourish him in her womb into milk in her breasts . . . Another of God's graces is in making the nipple as small as the needle's eye, not so wide as to make the baby choke on the milk . . . Then the body grows stronger and the baby starts to discern colors and hear voices, while God puts mercy and compassion into the hearts of his parents so that his upbringing is easy for them, even to the point that his food and drink are more important to them than their own. And all the trouble and pain of his care, like washing, cleaning and fondling him, guarding him against misfortune even against his will, all this seems like a trifle. When he passes from infancy to childhood, his parents do not come to dislike him nor do they grow weary of his many demands and his lack of comprehension of all the trouble in feeding him and cleaning after him. On the contrary, their love and concern for him grow until they reach their peak when he learns to talk in an orderly and reasonable way, when his senses and intellectual powers become stronger, when he starts to learn and differentiate the intelligible things by means of his natural faculties" (trans. M. Mansoor, London, 1973, pp. 162-63). Bahya continues his discussion in this section by pointing to other organs and bodily functions which further attest to the miraculous Divine order, designed to protect and nurture the human being during his entire lifetime. The effect of the Moslem milieu on Bahya's position must be considered. See below, n. 57.

³⁰ *ẓedah la-Derekh* (repr. Jerusalem, 1977), article one, principle three, chapter 14, p. 32a. R. Menahem's father fled France in 1306 and settled in Navarre where Menahem was born c. 1310. R. Menahem later studied in Toledo with R. Yehudah, son of R. Asher b. Yehiel (Rosh).

³¹ His approach to these topics is very similar to that of Bartholomew of England, see above, n. 21. There is also an explicit reference to swaddling of the infant in this text: "The newborn child must be anointed with astringents . . . because the child is soft. His skin must be toughened so that it will not be damaged easily by external agents. Also, he must be swaddled (*she-yehattel be-hittul*) so that his limbs will not become

crooked." Swaddling was a virtually universal practice in medieval society (see McLaughlin, pp. 113-14 and n. 51, and L. DeMause, above, n. 13, pp. 37-38. Cf. L. Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800*, pp. 160-62. On the termination of this practice, see Stone, pp. 424-26.). There is no doubt that this practice was common in Jewish society as well. It is also referred to in Baḥya Ibn Paquda's *Ḥovot ha-Levavot* (Warsaw ed., p. 205). Baḥya describes the trust that some men have in God, that He will do what is best for man just "as the mother takes passionate care of her child, cleaning and washing him and binding and unbinding him (=swaddling)." (The translation from the Arabic is Mansoor's [London, 1973], p. 329). In Judah Ibn Tibbon's Hebrew translation, the mother cares for the child, "be-reḥizato ve-hittulo u-keshirato ve-hatarato." Cf. Rashi to *Soṭah* 11b, s.v. meshapper. For an example of this practice as depicted in medieval Jewish art, see the depiction of the finding of Moses by the daughter of Pharaoh in the early fourteenth century in British Museum ms Add. 27210, fol.9 (reproduced in *Aspects of Jewish Culture in the Middle Ages*, ed. P. E. Szarmach [Albany, 1979], p. 136), fol. 10v (reproduced in color in B. Narkiss, *Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts* [Jerusalem, 1969], p. 57), and fol. 15r (reproduced in T. and M. Metzger, *La Vie Juive au Moyen Age*, p. 218).

32 Cf. McLaughlin, p. 118, and *Tosafot Beizah* 23b s.v. *ʿagalah shel qaṭan*.

33 Meiri's comment reads as follows: ". . . This is a suggestion to educate one's son in deportment and ethics according to the child's way, i.e., according to [the way suitable for] the child's age, a five-year old according to his way and a ten-year old according to his way."

34 This text was published and edited by A. M. Habermann in *Qovez ʿal Yad* 11=n.s. v.1 (1936):47-88. The relevant section is on p. 82.

35 Ariès, pp. 100-06; 396-98.

36 See for example, H. H. Ben-Sasson, *Peraqim be-Toledot ha-Yehudim bi-Mei ha-Beinayim* (third printing, Jerusalem, 1969), pp. 195-205 and J. Katz, *Exclusiveness and Tolerance* (New York, 1962), pp. 41-43; 55-63. As Prof. Katz notes, medieval Ashkenazic households certainly had non-Jewish servants in them. The behavior and interaction of these servants was carefully regulated. Cf. the Appendix, above.

37 *Sefer ha-Berit*, ed. F. Talmage, pp. 25-26. (Translation in F. Talmage ed., *Book of the Covenant* [Toronto, 1972], pp. 32-33). The point is made also, perhaps even more clearly, in a parallel passage in ms. Rome 53 (fol. 22v). The text was first published by J. Rosenthal in *Hagut ʿIvrit ba-Amerikah*, v. 3 (1974), p. 67. It is conveniently compared to the *Sefer ha-Berit* text by J. Rembaum in *AJSreview* 5 (1980):86-87. The key passage reads: "The maʿamin said: I will now establish that Jews practice good deeds, as is readily evident. Behold, the Jews young and old alike, study Torah. They accustom their sons from youth to study and go to synagogue. He removes obscenity from his mouth . . . They guard their daughters from being wanton . . . There is no open unchastity among them."

³⁸ See E. E. Urbach, "Études sur la littérature polémique au moyen âge," REJ 100 (1935) 66, and Rembaum, p. 86.

³⁹ See the statement of the student of Peter Abelard reproduced in B. Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (second edition, Oxford, 1952) p. 78, and the position of Berthold von Regensburg described in J. Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews* (Ithaca, 1982), p. 231 and the statement of Giordano da Rivalto in Cohen, p. 238. See also D. Berger, *The Jewish-Christian Debate in the High Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, 1979), pp. 25-27; 257. Cf. Petrus Alfonsi, *Dialogus Petri et Moysi Judaei*, in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J. Migne, v. 157, cols. 596-97; *Sefer Ḥasidim*, ed. J. Wistinetzki, #1301; Solomon b. Simon Duran, *Milḥemet Miḥvah* (Leipzig, 1856), p. 14 and J. Cohen, *ibid.*, pp. 67 and 147.

⁴⁰ The relationship between the Tosafists and the German Pietists has been a topic of discussion in some recent literature. See. H. Soloveitchik, "Three Themes in the *Sefer Ḥasidim*," *AJS Review* 1 (1976):339-54, I. Ta-Shma, "Miḥvat Talmud Torah ke-ve'ayah Ḥevratit-Datit be-Sefer Ḥasidim," *Bar Ilan* 14-15 (1977):104-09, and I. G. Marcus, *Piety and Power* (Leiden, 1981), pp. 102-05.

⁴¹ P. Baer, *Magamoto ha-Datit ha-Ḥevratit shel Sefer Ḥasidim*, *Zion* 1 (1938):6-7.

⁴² J. Shatzmiller, "Doctors and Medical Practice in Germany Around the Year 1200: The Evidence of *Sefer Ḥasidim*," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 33 (1983): 583-94. On the richness of *Sefer Ḥasidim* as a source for family life and the like within the larger Ashkenazic society, see especially p. 584.

⁴³ It must be noted that just as Ariès (pp. 25-26) and Holmes (above, n. 13, p. 165) have shown that the terms for small child, young child, adolescent etc. in medieval French and other Romance languages were often interchanged, we find in medieval Hebrew texts instances of a twenty year old being called a yeled or a two year old being referred to as a na'ar. See e.g. *Tosafot Niddah* 14b s.v. mai lav and E. E. Urbach, *Ba'alei ha-Tosafot*, v.2, p. 525, n. 17*. This interchangeability does show, to some extent, that the ages and stages of childhood were not as fixed then as they are today. In the case of *Sefer Ḥasidim*, the context in most cases will aid in making judgements.

⁴⁴ *Sefer Ḥasidim*, ed. J. Wistinetzki (hereafter referred to as SHP), section 432.

⁴⁵ SHP 770. See also section 815.

⁴⁶ SHP 102-03. I do not think that the sensitive appreciation of childhood in these sections is necessarily at odds with the attitude expressed in 857. Positive parental attitudes toward childhood do not dictate that the child (young adult) who strays must be held near at all costs.

⁴⁷ Cf. Rashi's commentary to 'Avodah Zarah 17a, s.v. avi hadaihu, where Rashi justifies the custom of 'Ula to kiss his sisters following synagogue services: "He would see the way of people when they leave the synagogue to immediately kiss their

father and mother or an important person on his heel or on his hand (as a sign of giving honor)." In light of the following sources, this text may also reflect historical reality.

48 Sefer ha-³Orah, ed. S. Buber, v.2, #133, p. 221 and Sefer ³Issur ve-Heter, ed. Freiman (repr. Jerusalem, 1973), #127: "Once a child [tinnoq] was sitting on the shoulders of my teacher [Rebbi] in the synagogue. When it came time to recite the Shema^c, he instructed that the child be removed from him because the average child is unclean [setam tinnoq ba-³ashpah] and it is not proper to recite Shema^c near the child." Shibbolei ha-Leqet^t, ed. S. Buber, end of section 15, p. 8) notes that this description was given by R. Isaac b. Judah (z"l). On the possible identification of R. Isaac's teacher in this text as R. Eliezer, see A. Grossman, Hakhmei Ashkenaz ha-Rishonim, pp. 218-19.

49 Sefer Or Zaru^a, v.2, Hilkhot Shabbat, section 68. See also Tosafot Hagigah 3a s.v. littein sekhar le-mevi³eihen and Maḥzor Vitry (ed. S. Hurwitz), p. 713.

50 See the sources cited in M. Gūdemann, Ha-Torah veha-Hayyim Bimei ha-Beinayim be-ẓarefat ve-Ashkenaz (Warsaw, 1897), p. 90, nn. 5,6. See also Haggahot Maimoniyot to Mishne Torah, "Hilkhot Megillah," end. Cf. Ariès, pp. 125-26.

51 Ibid., p. 90, n. 4. See also D. Goldschmidt, The Haggadah: Its Sources and History [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1960), p. 11, nn. 7-9. The implications of circumcision rites for attitudes toward childhood will not be dealt with in this study.

52 SHP 820.

53 SHP 160. Cf. SHP 683 for an insight into the disciplining of young children and its effect. The warning of the eleventh century churchman Burchard of Worms, that a mother should not put her child near a fire on which a pot of water is boiling, lest another person come and upset the pot of water and scald the child (found in Burchard's Decretum, book 19, article 149, published in J. P. Migne, Patrologia Latina v. 140 [1853], col. 1012) is more simplistic and does not reflect an appreciation of childish curiosity.

54 Tosafot ha-Rosh, Sanhedrin 19b s.v. she-peda³o mi-ẓa^car giddul banim (in Sanhedrei Gedolah, v.3, ed. B. Lipkin [Jerusalem, 1970], p. 81). The same point is made less clearly in the standard Tosafot. Both texts base the joy of having children on a slightly incongruous Talmudic passage, that God rewarded ^cOved ³Edom by granting him six children from one pregnancy. They also sharpen their questions by noting that Abraham also sired additional children from Qeṭurah. This argumentation may diminish the historicity of their sentiments regarding children.

55 We find several additional areas used by Ariès and others to judge the attitude of parents to children. These areas may not be as crucial or as indicative for Jewish society but they are nevertheless worth noting. There is ample evidence for Jewish children playing with toys and other games in this period. The evidence must be evaluated in light of the argument of Ariès and Holmes, referred to above, as to whether the fact that adults

played with the same toys and games vitiates this evidence as a further indication of societal attitudes toward childhood. A responsum found in Haggahot Mordekhai (Sanhedrin 722) signed by a certain R. Joseph b. Samuel, censures those adults who play with nuts as part of a game of chance. Among the reasons given for the impropriety of this activity is that only children were permitted to play with nuts and then, only on the first day of Passover. By the same token, a passage in Maḥzor Vitry (ed. Hurwitz, p. 291) recommends that women and children who regularly roll apples and nuts not be restrained from doing so on the Sabbath unless the one who admonishes them is sure that his words will be heeded. Cf. Sefer Roqeah, Hilkhot Shabbat, #130. Ball-playing and racing are also referred to (Maḥzor Vitry, *ibid.*); Tosafot Sanhedrin 26a s.v. kaddur, and Beḥzah 12a, s.v. hakhi garsinan; Shibbolei ha-Leveḥ, Hilkhot Shabbat #121, ed. S. Buber, p. 94; Semag #281; Rashi, Sanhedrin 77b, s.v. ke-gon 'eleh ha-mesahaqim be-kaddur) but the age of the participants is not always clear. Cf. SHP #168 (p. 308) and Tosafot Shabbat 45b s.v. hakha and generally L. Rabinowitz, *A Social History of the Jews in Northern France* (repr. New York, 1979), p. 229. There are also sources which refer to and deal with the singing of lullabies to young children. See *ẓedah la-Derekh*, cited above, n. 29 and SHP #344-47.

With respect to mourning for children who passed away, the death of a small child required the same mourning as the death of an adult and there is no indication that scholars or rabbis tried to downplay a child's death as we find in non-Jewish sources (see above, n. 8). A custom which existed in southern France and northern Spain, that a first born male child was not mourned since as a bekhor he was consecrated to God received the censure of such rabbinic authorities as Ribash (Responso [repr. Jerusalem, 1968], #95) and Meiri (*Hibbur ha-Teshuvah*, ed. A. Sofer [New York, 1950], pp. 613-14). Meiri notes that in some places the custom was observed only for a boy who died before he reached age thirteen, while in other places the age limit was twenty. In Narbonne, they mourned only the first day for a bekhor. Meiri reluctantly accepts the existence of the Narbonesse practice because it is an established minhag and cannot be summarily dismissed. Indeed Rabad and R. Asher of Lunel endorse this minhag, see *Teshuvot ha-Rabad*, ed. J. Kafih, #212. From Rabad's formulation it would seem that the custom was in effect even for a son who was past age thirteen when he died. A Talmudic ruling (Mo'ed Qaṭan 26b), prohibiting the mourner from holding an infant during the shiv'ah period, lest the mourner be brought to frivolity, is cited approvingly by many medieval authorities. Meiri's comment on this Talmudic passage may be significant. A mourner should not hold a child, "shema yavo li-dei ga'agu'a ve-yitganneh 'al ha-beriyot." Cf. also Nahmanides' *Torat ha-Adam in Kitvei ha-Ramban*, ed. C. Chavel, v.2, pp. 12-13. That the Jews did not let the fear of infant or child mortality affect their enjoyment of their children might possibly be adduced from the Biblical interpretation of R. Nissim b. Reuven of Gerona to Genesis 20:2 (*Peirush ha-Ran 'al ha-Torah*, ed. L. Feldman [Jerusalem, 1968], p. 270).

Finally, a statement about the types of sources available for the study of childhood in Jewish society is now in order. To this point, the vast corpus of Hebrew poetry written in western Europe, both sacred and secular, has proved to be disappointing

in terms of providing sources for this study. Evidence from these sources seems to be available through weak inference at best. Consider this passage from a liturgical poem of R. Amittai (in *Shirei Amittai*, ed. Y. David, [Jerusalem, 1975], p. 23), written for the Sabbath *ʿamidah* in which a *ḥatan* participates (*Qedushta de-Ḥatan*): "From the time that he is born, his parents will educate him in His commandments. At eight days he will be circumcised and then he will be taught the statutes of God and his Torah." As for medieval Jewish art, specifically manuscript illuminations, it has been noted at the outset of this study that lack of technical skills rather than a certain attitude toward childhood may characterize any findings in that discipline. Compare the differing depictions of children in the late 14th century Spanish Kaufmann Haggadah (reproduced in B. Narkiss, above, n. 30, p. 71), with the depictions in a late 14th century German Pentateuch (Narkiss, p. 115) and those in an early 15th century German siddur (p. 119). See also, T. and M. Metzger, *La Vie Juive au Moyen Age*, pp. 226, 230. Note also the thirteenth and fourteenth century depictions of Jesus as a baby reproduced in B. Blumenkranz, *Le Juif Médiéval au Miroir de l'Art Chrétien* (Paris, 1966), pp. 121-23, 127.

Important citations for the study of childhood in general medieval society could be discovered in prose literature, tales, stories, memoirs and hagiography. We simply do not possess works on medieval Jewish figures comparable to the writings describing the life of St. Anselm (see R. W. Southern, *St. Anselm and His Biographer* [Cambridge, 1966]) or the memoirs of Guibert of Nogent (see J. F. Benton, *Self and Society in Medieval France: The Memoirs of Guibert of Nogent* [New York, 1970]). On the absence of a Jewish genre comparable to medieval Christian hagiography, see H. H. Ben-Sasson, "Le-Megamot ha-Kronografiah ha-Yehudit shel Yemel ha-Beinayim u-Va'ayotehah," in *Historians and Historical Schools* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1962), p. 29. While we do have medieval Jewish stories and tales (see J. Dan, *Ha-Sippur ha-ʿIvri bi-Mei ha-Beinayim*, Jerusalem, 1974), these limited sources do not contain much material concerning the appreciation of childhood.

56 A responsum of Ramah (*Or Ḥaddiqim* #289) may be indicative of child custody procedures in this period. See also the question in R. Joseph ben Meir ha-Levi Ibn Megash, *Responsa*, (Warsaw, 1870), #133, and below nn. 56,67 and *Responsa* of Rosh, 17:7 and 82:2-3. Of course, the trustee or executor, appointed by the *beit din* also had an important role in protecting the interests of his young charge(s). Indeed, many responsa deal with children under the care of the trustee. See e.g., M. Elon ed. *Mafteaḥ ha-She'elot u-Teshuvot shel Ḥakhmei Sefarad u-Ḥefon Afrika*, v.2 (Jerusalem, 1981), pp. 20-21, 73-74, 117, 198-99. The parameters of this institution are outside the scope of this study. See also I. A. Agus, *Urban Civilization in Pre-Crusade Europe*, index, s.v. trustee, and *idem.*, *R. Meir of Rothenburg* (Philadelphia, 1947), v.1, p. 67. See Judah b. Asher, *Responsa Zikhron Yehudah* (Berlin, 1846) #85 which records a question concerning a father who was dying and made a bequest to his unborn child. Cf. J. H. Mundy, "Charity and Social Work in Toulouse, 1100-1250," *Traditio* 22 (1966):256-57 and 266.

57 See L. Finkelstein, *Jewish Self-Government in the Middle Ages*, (2nd edition, New York, 1964), pp. 168-70, text C.

58 McLaughlin, pp.

59 R. Joseph Ibn Megash, Responsa (Warsaw, 1870), no. 71. While R. Joseph flourished in Moslem Spain, where he died in 1141, the content of his responsum in light of the sources cited above in n. 56 is certainly appropriate for our discussion and need not necessarily be viewed as the product of Moslem influence on Jewish society in the lands ruled by Islam.

60 See e.g., Tosafot Ketubot 50a s.v. bar shit le-miqra, S. Assaf, Meqorot le-Toldeot ha-Ḥinukh be-Yisrael, (hereafter Assaf) v.4, p. 2, Da'at Zeqenim to Leviticus 19:23 and Zedah la-Derekh cited above, n. 29.

61 A representative sampling of these responsa which highlights the fact that the melammed (tutor) invariably taught in the home of the student(s) or at least in their town consists of the following sources: Teshuvot R. Gershom, ed. S. Eidelberg (New York, 1955), #71-73, responsum of R. Yehudah ha-Kohen, published by A. Grossman in Alei Sefer 1 (1975):33, Sefer Or Zarua, Pisqei Bava Mezi'a, #243, Responsa of R. Meir of Rothenburg, Prague #385-87, 37, 85, 250, 385, 434, 488, 667, 833; Cremona #2, 3, 125, 191. Note also the halakhic formulations of Sefer Mordekhai, Bava Mezi'a 343-46.

62 Responsa of R. Gershom, ed. S. Eidelberg (New York, 1955), #71, p. 165-66.

63 See e.g., SHP #1484, and Assaf, v.4 (Tel Aviv, 1930), pp. 33-34.

64 Sefer Haggel ha-Torah outlines a program for elementary and advanced education. Most scholars now assume that it is of Provencal origin. See I. Twersky, Rabad of Posquières (second edition, Philadelphia, 1980), pp. 25-26 and nn. 25-27. S. W. Baron entertains the possibility that the document emanated from the milieu of the German Pietists. See his Social and Religious History of the Jews, v.6 (Philadelphia, 1958), p. 395.

65 SHP 822-25, 748-49, 777-79, 1479; Assaf, v.1 (second printing, 1954), pp. 10-11.

66 The responsa from Sefer ha-Dinim are found among the responsa of R. Meir of Rothenburg, Prague edition, #906-07. See the translation and analysis of these responsa in I. A. Agus, Urban Civilization in Pre-Crusade Europe (second edition, New York, 1969), pp. 402-04.

67 R. Meir ha-Levi, Responsa (Or Zaddiqim), #290.

68 For Ashkenaz, see I. A. Agus, The Heroic Age of Franco-German Jewry (New York, 1969), pp. 277-84. Note especially Tosafot, Qiddushin 41a s.v. Masur and Kol Bo (Lemberg, 1860), p. 86a. This practice proved beneficial for the couple both economically and socially. For Provence, see Teshuvot Hakmei Provence, ed. A. Sofer (Jerusalem, 1967), pp. 123-4. For Spain, see A. A. Neuman, The Jews in Spain, v.2, pp. 22-24. In late medieval and early modern Jewish society, the average age of children at the time of marriage went up. See J. Katz, Tradition and Crisis, p. 139 and above, n. 15a. See also McLaughlin, p. 126, n. 14.

69 This position of Rashba is not found in his published responsa or halakhic writings but is cited in his name by R. Jacob Castro, Responsa Oholei Ya'akov (Leghorn, 1783) #300. See G. Blidstein, *Honor Thy Father and Mother* (New York, 1975), p. 104.

70 R. Solomon Ibn Adret, Responsa, v.4 (Salonika, 1863), #168. Cf. She'elot ha-Rashba ha-Meyuhasot la-Ramban (Warsaw, 1883), #102 concerning the impact of a quarrel between a wife and her father-in-law on the couple's domestic harmony.

71 SHP 564, p. 371. Cf. SHP 1084--on Psalms 128:3 ("Your sons shall be like olive tree seedlings around your table") the author comments: "If a person has older sons (banim gedolim), he shall not let them eat in a different house, in order that they not become gluttons."

72 SHP 563.

73 see G. Blidstein, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

74 See above, n. 68. It would seem that this type of arrangement was usually implemented to cover the early years of the young couple's married life. See the next note. Parents were often instrumental in helping to settle the young couple's spats and squabbles. See Responsa of Ramah (Or Zaddiqim) #253 and Responsa of Ran (Warsaw, 1882), #15. On the other hand, we find the wife returning to her mother's house to give birth (Responsa of R. Meir of Rothenburg, Prague 946) and when she was at odds with her husband. See Responsa Zikhron Yehudah #71 and Responsa of Rashba, v.1 #692, v.4 #72 and v.8 #102.

75 Responsa of R. Meir of Rothenburg, Cremona 217-18. In the late medieval period in Europe, a contract was drawn up before marriage which stipulated that the parents would maintain the young couple in their household for a set number of years. The time period for this maintenance was relatively brief. Cf. J. Ketz, "Nisu'ir, ve-Hayei 'Ishut be-Moza'ei Yemei ha-Beinayim," *Zion* 10 (1946):25 and *idem.*, *Tradition and Crisis*, pp. 139-40. For the development of this institution in general medieval society (beginning in Languedoc after 1350), see J. L. Flandrin (next note), pp. 83-84.

76 The book was originally published in French in 1976 under the title: *Familles: parente, maison, sexualité dans l'ancienne régime*. It was translated into English under the title *Families in Former Times--Kinship, Household and Sexuality* (Cambridge, 1979) by R. W. Southern.

77 Flandrin, pp. 130-33.

78 *Ibid.*, p. 136.

79 *Ibid.*, p. 175. Cf. p. 119.

80 *Ibid.*, pp. 137-39.

81 *Ibid.*, pp. 176-77.

82 *Ibid.*, pp. 133-36.

83 Ibid., p. 237.

84 Qiddushin 29a-30b; 82a; Ketubot 65b.

85 Regarding support and sustenance, see e.g., *Semaq* #277. On parental involvement in selecting a suitable mate while considering the feelings of the child, see the sources analyzed by G. Blidstein, *Honor Thy Father and Mother*, pp. 85-94. The obligation of the father to train his child in religious observances (*miẓvat ḥinukh*) was greatly expanded in the medieval period. For a collection of sources on many facets of this obligation, see Y. Blau, *Ḥanokh la-Na'ar* (Jerusalem, 1980). On the obligations of the mother in this regard see Rashi, *Ḥagigah* 2a s.v. *'eizehu qaṭan*; *Tosafot 'Eruvin* 82a s.v. *qaṭan ben shesh*; *Tosafot Yeshanim Yoma* 82a s.v. *ben shemoneh*; *Tosafot Nazir* 28b s.v. *beno 'in bitto lo*; *Responsa of R. Meir of Rothenburg*, ed. Cremona, no. 200.

86 See e.g., *Shabbat* 127a, *Pesaḥim* 113a.

¹² See e.g., *Sefer Or Zaru'a*, *Hilkhos Yibbum ve-Qiddushin* #629, *Shibbolei ha-Leqet*, v.2 (ed. M. Z. Hasidah [Jerusalem, 1969], p. 111) citing R. Samson of Sens, *Teshuvot Hakhmei Provence*, ed. A. Schreiber, pp. 291-92, *Semaq* #277, and especially R. Meir of Rothenburg, *Responsa* (Prague) #863, which contains opinions of both R. Samson and R. Tam.

¹³ This statement of Riaz is cited in *Shiltei Gibborim to Ketubot* 59b. It is also found in *Pisgei Riaz*, ed. A. Liss (Jerusalem, 1973), p. 201. Cf. *SHP* #346 and *Pisgei Rid* (R. Isaiah of Trani), ed. A. Liss, p. 495.

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